Honesdale Coal Pockets
Between 700 and 800 blocks
of Main and Commercial Streets
Honesdale
Wayne County
Pennsylvania

HAER No. PA-82

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
MID-ATLANTIC REGION NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19106

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Location: Situated on a parcel parallel to and approximatly 200 feet to the southwest of the 700 and 800 blocks of Main Street, Honesdale, Wayne County, Pennsylvania

The structure is bounded on the southwest side (uphill) side by Commercial Street.

U.S.G.S. Honesdale Quadrangle, Universal Mercator Coordinates: 4602065 meters north; 478665 meters east.

Present Owner: Honesdale National Bank

Present Use: Abandoned

Significance: Although determined not to be part of the early gravity railroad and canal system, this deteriorating coal pocket structure belongs to a family of rapidly disappearing coal and railroad structures which once dotted the countryside throughout northeast Pennsylvania.

Historian: Unknown.

Transmitted by: Jean P. Yearby, HAER, 1985, from information compiled by the Mid-Atlantic Regional Office, National Park Service.

Historically, Wayne County has not been readily associated with the coal industry, primarily because it has little, if any, coal in "paying veins" beneath its surface. Nevertheless, the area's contribution as a major transportation link was vital to the industry for nearly three-quarters of a century.

With the discovery of anthracite as a heat-producing resource, an efficient connection had to be made between the New York marketplace and the rich, coal-producing Lackawanna Valley. This dilemma was solved by 1829 with completion of the gravity railroad between Honesdale and Carbondale, and the Delaware and Hudson Canal from Honesdale to the New York area. In other words, Honesdale served as the point of transition between rail and canal transportation, which accounts for the original construction of coal storage and conveying structures in that community.

Perhaps the most commonly known historical event associated with the coal industry in Honesdale was the running of the "Stourbridge Lion," the first locomotive to operated in America. Although relatively unsuccessful as a result of its 7-1/2-ton weight, the D & H Railroad and Canal, as published by Wayne County Historical Society, hails the event as "the first locomotive to turn a wheel on the Western Hemisphere."

However, by 1899, the steam locomotive had been sufficiently refined to render the canal mule obsolete. Primarily for that reason, the canal basin at Honesdale was filled in and a railyard constructed. At that time, the original structure, utilized to store coal and convey it to barges, was removed and a new one erected at a slightly different location.

Illustrated Wayne County, published in 1900, dates the existing coal pockets and verifies locations of the former. According to this publication, in June 1899, President R. M. Olyphant and Vice-President Young visited Honesdale and announced the intention of the D & H Company to change the old canal basin at Honesdale into a railroad yard. Work on the changeover was begun in September and completed in December 1899. Photographs taken before and after the changeover, depicted on page 140 of the previously mentioned publication, clearly shows the existing pockets. In the northward views, it can be seen that the old docks, screens, boat-loading shutes, and retail coal pockets had been removed. Photographic evidence also suggests that all operations connected with the early canal system covered a much larger area than now exists.

According to railroad maps, Honesdale was Plane No. 13, and a map found in an 1872 atlas of Wayne County shows that the canal boat basin and coal pockets were located behind the D & H headquarters building. Coal storage areas extended from 5th to 8th Street, and the original coal pocket slides extended to 9th Street, well beyond the location of the present coal pocket structures.

Both the original and existing coal pocket structures served the basic purpose of receiving, storing and conveying coal from one vehicle to another for transportation to other markets. Also, the basic components and sequence of operation were similar and are described as follows:

1. A railroad car from the northern anthracite fields would pass over the appropriate bin and deposit the coal in an opening between the rails.

2. The coal was then stored in a sloping timber bin ($45^{o}\pm$) until the next means of transportation was in place below. Both structures, therefore, required a change in vertical elevation between the incoming and outgoing vehicles.

3. At the proper time, coal would be released from the bin and deposited into an awaiting vehicle. The release mechanism did vary between the two structures and is described in some detail later in this report.

Standing approximately two stories in height, the remaining coal pocket structure consists of over two dozen storage bins, originally intended for various gradations of coal. Some signage still exists denoting "Nut," "Chestnut," "Pea," etc. This particular structure is designed primarily as a bridge, since historic grade did not evidently provide adequate natural transition from the upper point of delivery to the lower point of discharge. Further contributing to the overall height of this structure is a clearance required beneath the chute to accommodate a coal car.

Old photographs from 1860 and 1898 not only show the area covered by the original coal pockets, but also the fact that they were clustered in detached groupings, apparently to accommodate the long canal boats with limited maneuverability. Also, differences in design and mechanical operation between the original and existing pockets are clearly visible.

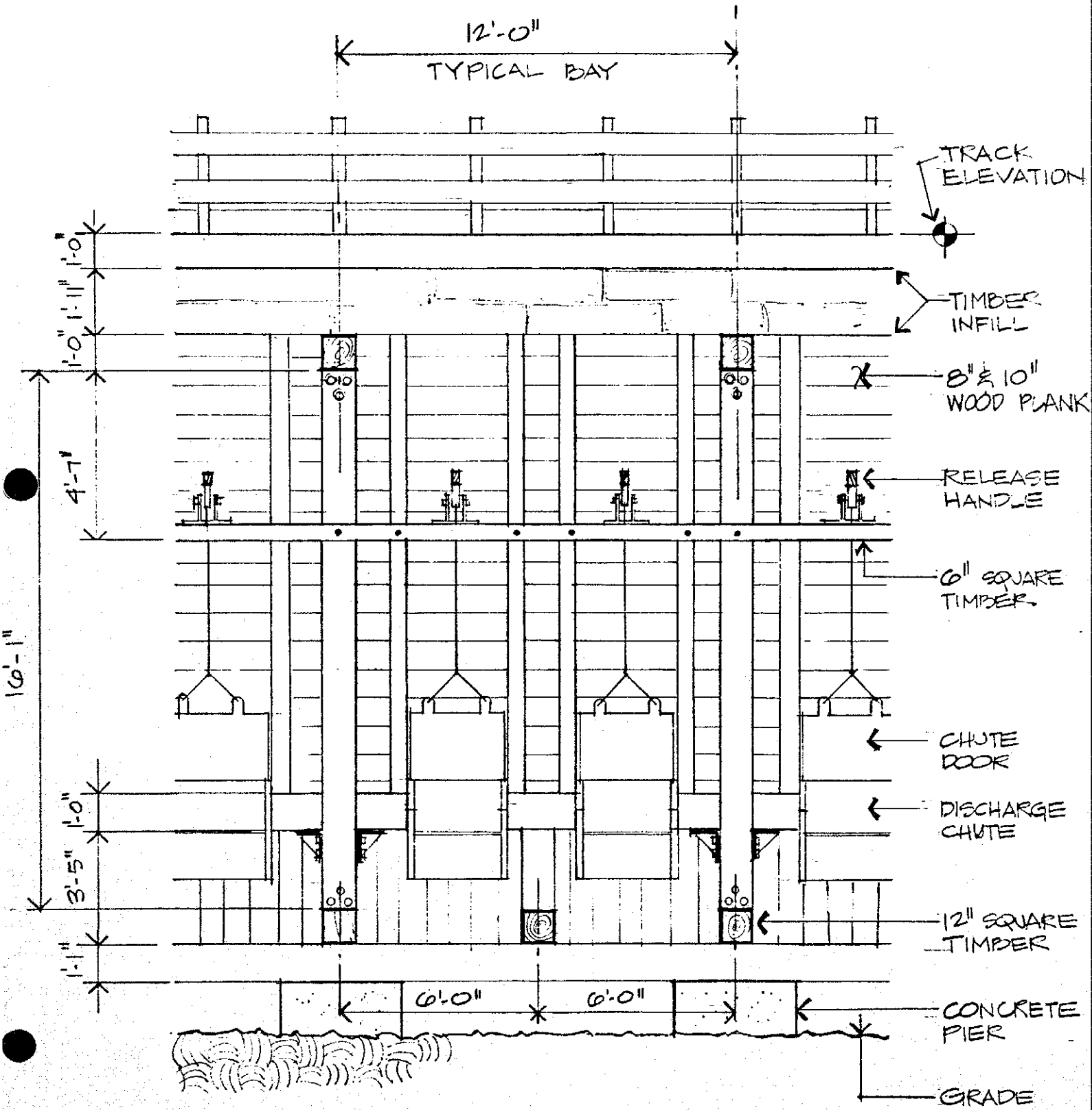
Specifically, early photodocumentation indicates that the discharge chute on the former structure was raised and lowered by an operator located on a walkway above the chute, while the present structure has a chute door controlled from below by a release handle and pull cord. Operation from above was certainly the only practical method of loading the long water-borne vessels.

The existing Honesdale coal pockets are comprised of heavy timber primary members on top of concrete piers. Infilled within the heavy timber framework are storage bins constructed of wood planking. Likewise, wood planking is used as a decking material on the bridge surface above. The major points of connection are mechanically reinforced with heavy metal angles, and these same jointures are also notched to achieve added rigidity.

Although these original construction techniques and details appear relatively refined, the structure, as it stands today, presents a rather crude and unsophisticated appearance. This is attributed to years of bracing, patching, and shimming which was not necessarily performed with any great degree of care. Additionally, its partial state of collapse serves to mask much of the original attention given to more precise construction detailing.

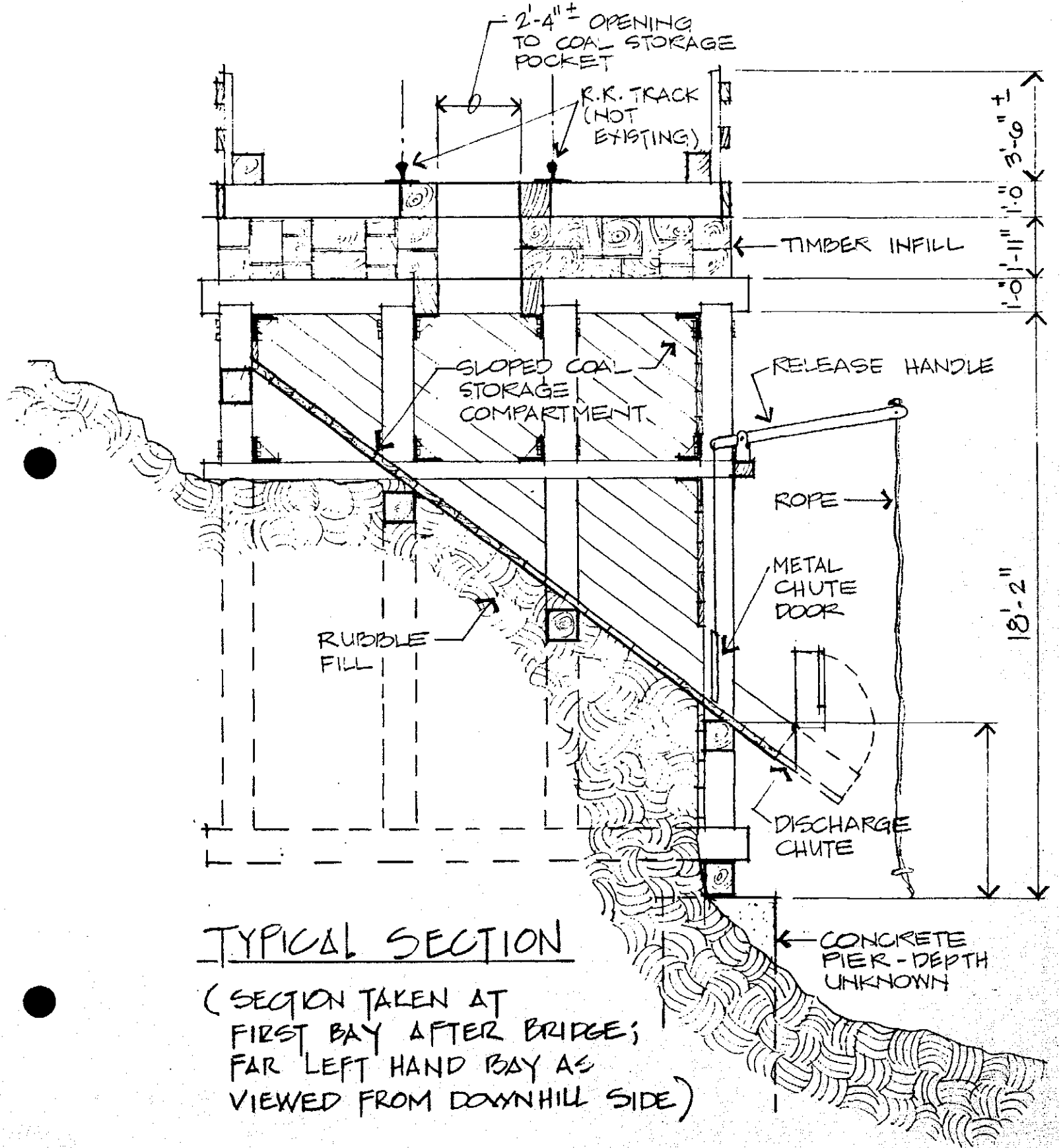
The remaining portion of stone wall adjacent to the coal pockets definitely appears to be part of the canal basin retaining wall. The 1872 atlas, as well as early photographs, seem to shows that the canal basin was located in exactly the area where the wall now stands. This, combined with the similarity in appearance when compared with photodocumentation of the original wall, provides adequate proof to conclude they are one in the same.

The existing stone retaining wall is in stable condition, since masonry by nature endures quite well, and consists of random sizes of uncut stone, with no visible mortar joints. The visible portions of the wall stand approximately three to six feet above existing grade, although portions are undoubtedly buried.



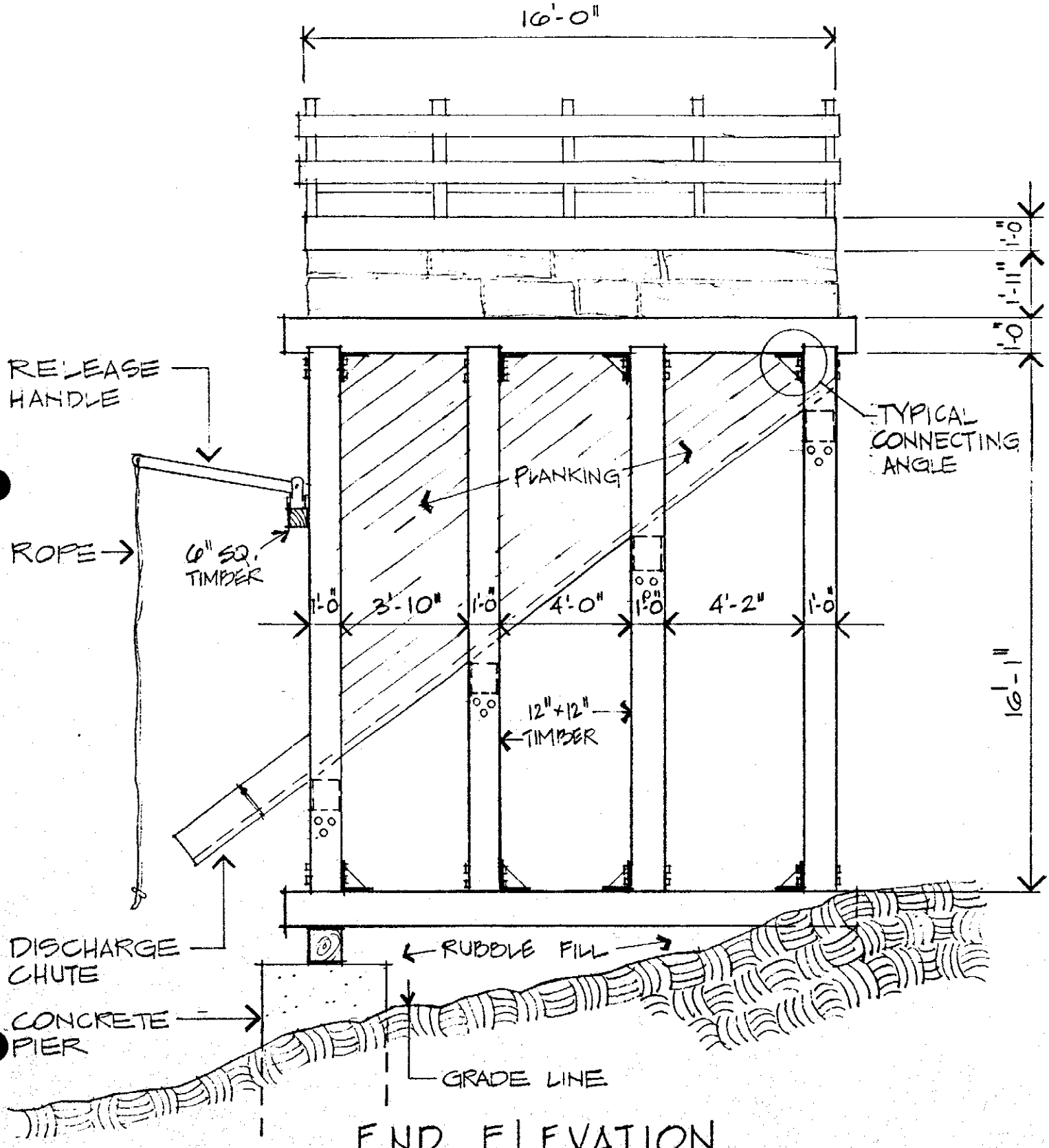
FRONT ELEVATION - TYPICAL BAY

(15 ½ BAYS TOTAL)



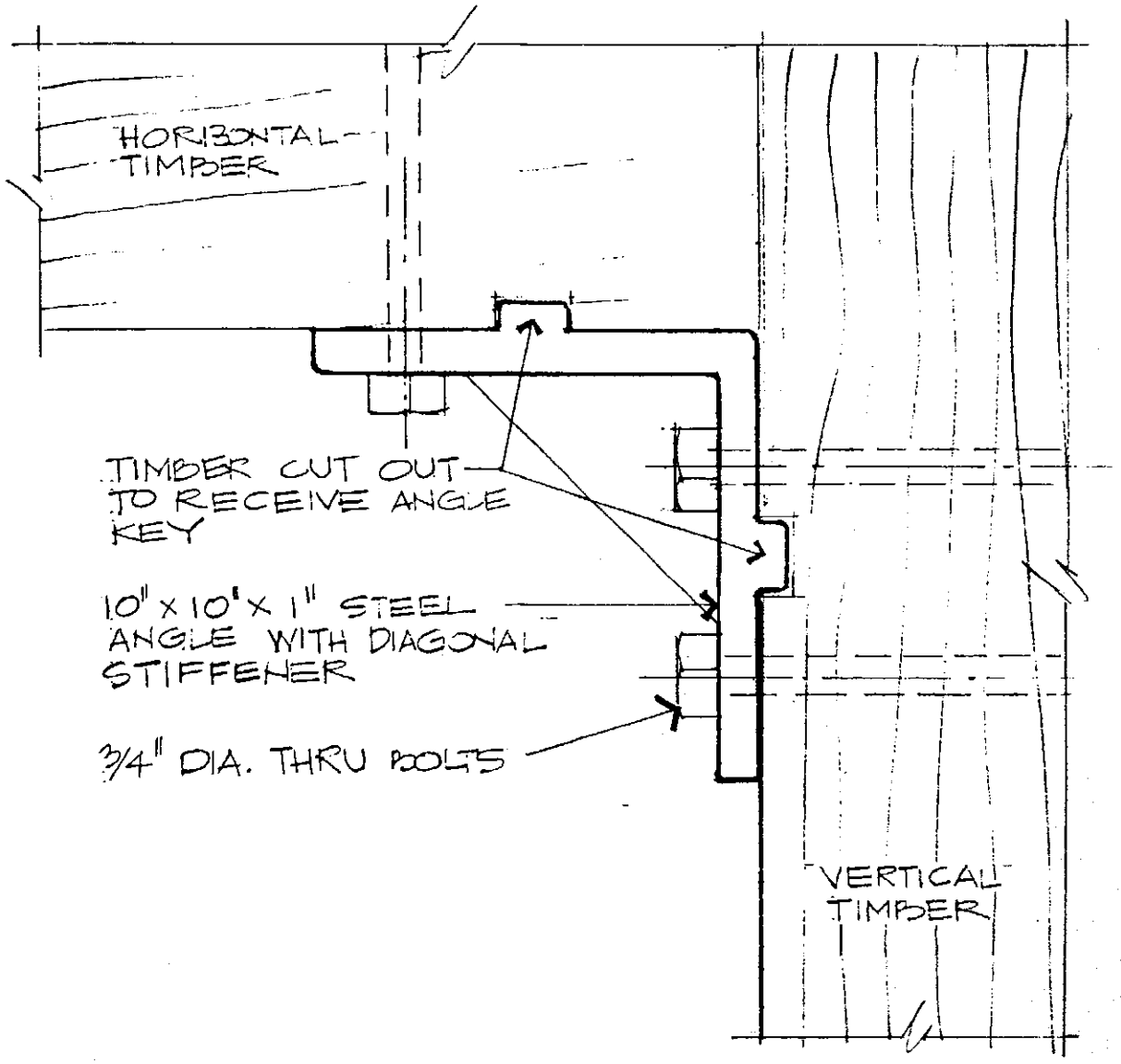
TYPICAL SECTION

(SECTION TAKEN AT FIRST BAY AFTER BRIDGE; FAR LEFT HAND BAY AS VIEWED FROM DOWNHILL SIDE)



END ELEVATION

(OPPOSITE END OF STRUCTURE FROM SECTION)



TYPICAL CONNECTING ANGLE

NOTE: FIELD SURVEY FOR DRAWINGS SHOWN ON PAGES 7, 8, 9 & 10 TAKEN ON JULY 26, 1984